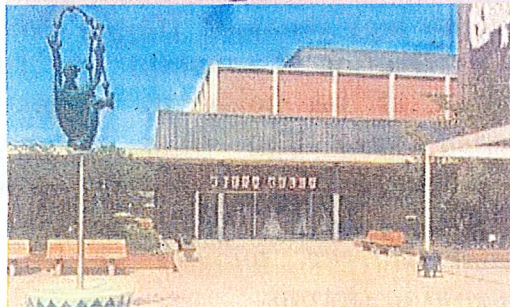




In 1955 the Interstate 94 Expressway Route was approved, and construction on Eastland Shopping Center began soon after. Eastland opened in 1957, and in 1960 the Expressway was completed as far as Vernier Road.

Early photos of Eastland Shopping Center



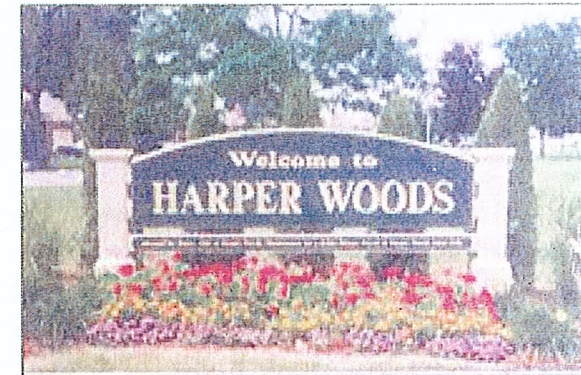
Harper Woods Historical Committee
proprietor of
Heritage Room



Located in the Lower Level
of the
Harper Woods Library
Michigan's First Green Library (TM)

19601 Harper Avenue
(I-94 at the Allard Exit)
Harper Woods, MI 48225
313-343-2575

A Brief History
of the
City of Harper Woods
Michigan



Prepared
by the
Harper Woods
Historical Committee

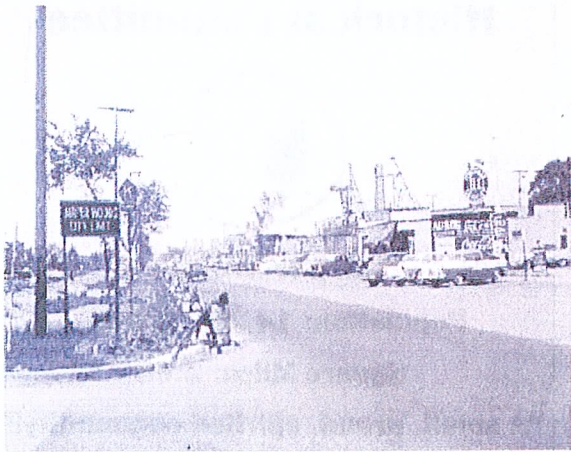


Harper Woods
Population: 14,254 (2000)
Square Miles: 2.63
"A small, proud, spirited community!"

Revised 1/2010

HARPER WOODS was incorporated as a city on February 19, 1951, when the residents of Gratiot Township (est. 1895) voted to incorporate the entire area of the Township as Harper Woods. A Charter Commission was elected, a Charter prepared and adopted, a City Council was elected. The City of Harper Woods was “born” on Monday, October 29, 1951, when the Charter took effect and the first City Council was sworn in.

The first new settler in the part of the Township which is now Harper Woods was Casper Salter, who in 1859 took up a claim on a wagon track then called Pumpkin Hook Road (now Kelly Road) between our Woodland and Woodcrest Avenues. Other families followed, and by 1875 there were eleven homes along Pumpkin Hook Road.



Kelly Road, 1950s

Formerly Pumpkin Hook Road

At that time the main North-South artery was the road from Detroit to Fort Gratiot (now Port Huron) which was originally cleared by the Moravians in 1782. In the 1830s it was called the Gratiot Military Road, and in 1859 was converted into a plank toll road. At the turn of the century, Gratiot was Main Street for the farm settlement on Pumpkin Hook Road, with a blacksmith, a wagon maker, a general store, a saloon, and the Westphalia Shooting Park.

The community grew slowly. By the mid 1930s there were still only about fifty homes in Gratiot Township. However, recovery from the Great Depression coincided with a push toward the suburbs, and from 1935 on growth was rapid. The federal census in 1940 gives the population as 836.

The Gratiot Township Directory of 1939-1940 gives a picture of the community: about half the wage earners were employed in industry, a quarter in retail or service occupations, a good many in building trades, a substantial portion unemployed, and two retired.

Most of the houses were in two areas: near the corner of Vernier Road and Mt. Clemens Drive (now Harper Avenue) and between Kelly Road and Mt. Clemens Drive from Kingsville to Roscommon. An earlier subdivision



Eastside Drive-In Theater

1940 Harper Avenue; built in 1938

between Woodmont and Fleetwood on both sides of Mt. Clemens Drive failed during the Depression years, and in 1940 Eastwood was the only street with houses on it from Roscommon north almost to Vernier Road.

With the 1940s came the great influx of families building homes. The fact that most streets weren't paved, many water mains weren't in (people had wells or carried water), and the land was subject to flooding didn't dampen the enthusiasm of these modern “settlers.” The township's population was 9,148 in 1950. Ten years later, the population had soared to 19,195.

The city was renamed Harper Woods (from Gratiot Township) in 1951 because of its being in a heavily wooded area and from its main thoroughfare, Harper Avenue, which begins in Detroit and was named for Walter Harper, founder of Harper Hospital in Detroit.